

Bits & Pieces



Jigsaw Qld: (07) 3358 6666 or 1800 21 03 13 (Qld only) - www.jigsawqueensland.com

Honouring the National Apology: 12 Years On

By Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow - President

On Friday 21 March 2025, Jigsaw Queensland was honoured to host a moving and meaningful event to mark the 12th anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions.

Held in collaboration with You Gave Me a Voice, Origins Queensland, ALAS Australia, and the Association for Adoptees, the event brought our community together to reflect and remember. The event was funded by the Australian Government's Department of Social Services and was live-streamed for those unable to join us in person.

The tone of the morning was both reflective and restorative—offering space for grief, recognition, and shared strength. It was a time to remember and honour those affected, including many who are no longer with us. Their absence was acknowledged through a moment of silence and the lighting of candles by representatives from key stakeholder groups—each flame a symbol of enduring memory and connection.

A highlight of the event was a presentation to Dr Trevor Jordan in recognition of his longstanding advocacy, followed by a keynote address by Dr Jenny Conrick on the impact of adoption across the life cycle.

Dr Conrick offered a deep and compassionate insight into the enduring impacts of adoption. Drawing on over 30

years of social work within the adoption community, she shared themes from her research and practice—including the invisible weight many carry into older age, the complex experiences of reunion, and the grief, identity struggles, and resilience that mark the journeys of so many adopted people and their families.

Her reflections reminded us that while some have found resolution, many continue to search for understanding and peace—often for the first time in their 60s, 70s, or even 80s. Her call for continued recognition, specialised support, and national investment in research and redress served as both a challenge and an inspiration.

Kerri Saint's original song, *After the Rain*, debuted on the day, powerfully capturing the emotional complexities of adoption through lyrics and music. Her words echoed the sentiment felt across the room—that after the storm, there is hope.

The National Apology delivered by Prime Minister Julia Gillard in Parliament on 21 March 2013 acknowledged the profound



Dr Trevor Jordan is recognised for his advocacy work.

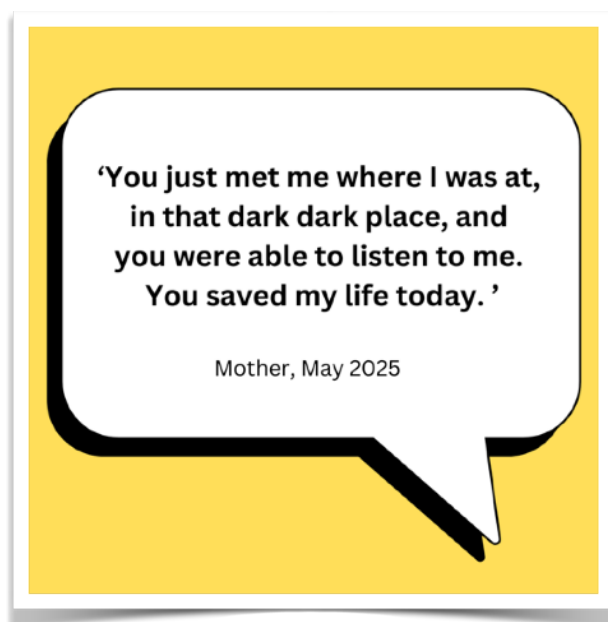
pain caused by past adoption policies and practices. Twelve years on, the importance of this apology continues to resonate. Events like this are vital not only for individual healing but for collective recognition of the harm done and the ongoing need for support and reform.

At its heart, the 2025 anniversary event was a coming together of people with lived experience—mothers, adoptees, fathers, siblings, and supporters—united in remembrance, truth-telling, and the pursuit of justice.

It was a reminder that healing is ongoing, that solidarity matters, and that funded support services remain essential.

We thank all who attended, contributed, and continue to stand beside those impacted by forced adoption. Your

presence made this day one of reflection, connection, and quiet strength.



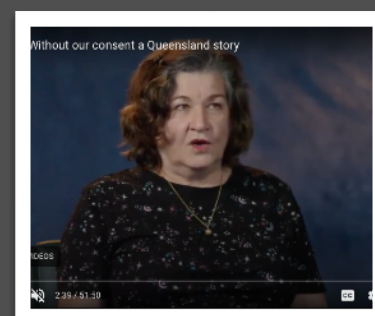
Message from our CEO, Helen Angela Taylor

We received heaps of positive feedback after the National Apology Anniversary event. My favourite was a social media comment that said 'best speeches ever!'

One speech that stood out for me was Kerri Saint's reflection before we heard the debut of her new song 'After the Rain'. Kerri's words resonated with me and may resonate with you as well.



Dr Jenny Conrick speaks on the impact of adoption across the life cycle.





Kerri Saint introduces her new song, 'After the Rain'.

When babies are born there is a general excitement, and joy generated: as Mum, Dad, family members and friends gather to celebrate together, welcoming a new and treasured member into the family. And within this excitement, the baby feels the love, safety and joy that radiates towards them. The sound of Mum's familiar voice and heartbeat tells them that all is well in the world. They are safe and they are loved.

However, for adoptees this is not our beginning, this is not our story.

For us as newborns we're birthed into a storm called adoption. Where the clouds of

darkness envelope us. Though thrust into the light of life, we are carried away by strong winds called condemnation and judgement, our hearts are drowned under our raining tears called fear, that no one dries.

We are displaced by this raging storm, sent like refugees to shelter in foreign lands. We learn to adjust, to call it home, but always feeling different, always feeling like strangers.

Some of us manage to find a way to manoeuvre through the storm and emotions, unable to speak, to express. Anger and resentment eat at our heart, never finding a way to shift the indescribable pain, grief and loss we feel.

There are those of us who somehow summon the strength to endure, never allowing the storm of adoption to silence our



Forced Adoption
Support Services

voices. Battered and bruised from being tossed to and fro, we batten down the hatches and meet the storm head on.

DNA 101

This month we're excited to deliver an online information session on DNA testing for people impacted by adoption.

Our presenter is Melanie Dunstan who founded The DNA Connection in 2018. Here is a link to her website:

<https://www.thednaconnection.com.au/>

Melanie is passionate about solving mysteries using DNA, helping people to find missing connections or rebuild relationships, and create love and identity by reconnecting people back to their birth families. She has five university degrees in Nursing, including a Masters of Nurse Practitioner. She has also trained as a Genetic Genealogist, Private Investigator, and Skip Tracer. The one hour information session will cover the following topics:

- What DNA can and can't do
- Choosing the right test
- How to conduct the test
- Understanding your results
- Next steps after testing
- Contacting DNA matches
- Resources and support



Keep an eye on our Facebook page for more details or email us at support@jigsawqld.org.au if you'd like more information.

Self-Compassion

At the start of this year, we partnered with Axis Clinic to deliver an eight-week group program on Overcoming Negative Self-Talk and Learning Self-Compassion.



The program helps participants develop their personal practice in self-compassion to address difficulties associated with shame, self-criticism, relational and attachment trauma.

We invested in this important program so that people impacted by adoption could learn how to:

- Identify critical thoughts
- Respond to self with kindness
- Use mindfulness to manage emotions
- Set healthy boundaries
- Accept difficult emotions without judgement
- Feel more connected to others

A face-to-face group with seven participants met at Jigsaw Queensland headquarters on Wednesday evenings from 19 February, and an online group with eight participants was held on Thursday evenings from 20 February.

The online group included people from across Queensland – north Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and central Queensland – and in New South Wales.

This opportunity for group healing was funded by the Department of Social Services so participants did not need to pay any fees. Attendance and participation were strong across both groups, with only one person withdrawing midway because the program did not meet their expectations.

Participants were asked to participate in pre and post program outcome measure assessments. Here are the results:

- For the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) all but one participant reported a reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- For the Compassion, Motivation and Action Scale all respondents reported an increase in self-compassion intention, tolerance and self-compassionate actions and behaviours.

Participants were also invited to give feedback via a survey upon course completion. Every person who completed the survey:

- Rated the program as 'excellent' or 'very good'
- Was satisfied with the group experience
- Described feeling very, or extremely comfortable participating in the group
- Said they would recommend the program to others.



As a result of this fantastic feedback, we are exploring more options for collaboration with Axis Clinic next financial year so keep an eye out on our social media.

Peer Support Program

Peer support is the foundation upon which Jigsaw Queensland began operations in 1976, and still a fundamental part of our values and operations, with daily phone support as well as monthly support groups.

For the past few months we've been working to re-invigorate our peer support model, and embrace the social services shift towards recognising, and remunerating, the



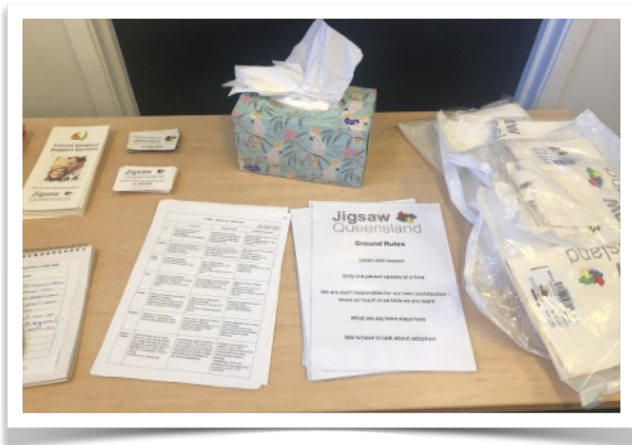
contribution of people with lived experience. So far we've doubled the size of our Peer Support Worker team, enrolled each worker in Lifeline's Accidental Counsellor training course, and developed a new Peer Support Manual.

We're on track to have all new arrangements in place by the end of this month so we can start planning some exciting new peer-led activities from July 2025.

The Power of Peer Support

By Dr Jo-Ann Sparrow - President

At Jigsaw Queensland, we believe that information, support, and connection are the cornerstones of healing. For those affected



by adoption—whether as adopted people or as parents who lost children to adoption—these cornerstones have the power to transform lives.

Peer support is one of the most fundamental and life-changing services we offer. It's not clinical or prescriptive. It's about people walking alongside each other, sharing wisdom drawn from lived experience, and creating a safe place for stories that are often hard to tell.

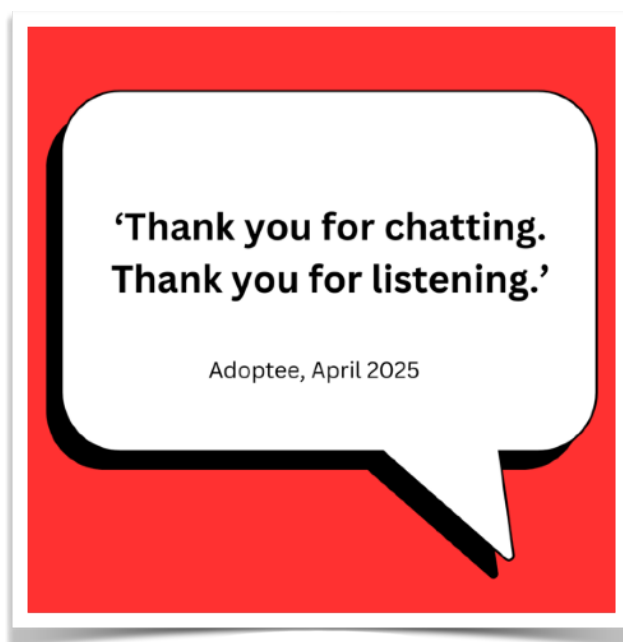
I know this because peer support has been instrumental in my own journey. I first picked up the phone to Jigsaw in 1991, a 19-year-old who had just discovered she could access her adoption records and wanted to find her mother. The information I received from a volunteer peer worker that day shaped the way I approached my search—and ultimately gave me the best chance at a respectful and successful reunion.

In my early 30s, as a new mother myself, I walked into my first adoptee support group. I left feeling validated, connected, and—for the first time in a long time—not alone.

Years later, something a facilitator said to me during a tea break shifted my perspective about contacting my father. That one comment stayed with me and led, eventually, to a deeply rewarding reunion.

Over the years, I've both received and offered peer support. I've seen the way understanding can flow between people who share a common experience. It cuts through shame and fear and isolation. It reminds us that our stories matter and that healing is possible.

Peer support doesn't require perfection. It calls for presence, empathy, and





respect. At Jigsaw, we honour lived experience as a form of wisdom. Every peer support conversation is a moment of trust and courage—a chance to say, "You're not alone, and your experience is valid."

Being a peer worker also transforms us. It helps us better understand the ripple effects of adoption, deepens our own healing, and connects us to something greater than ourselves. The greatest gift we bring is our humanity—our willingness to meet others in their pain and walk beside them with compassion.

To everyone involved in peer support at Jigsaw—whether you're new to the role or have been part of the team for years—thank you. Your quiet acts of presence and care are making a profound difference, one conversation at a time.

**'Excellent service BTW ...
Our call last week
helped enormously.'**

Adopted person, January 2025

Adoption & ADHD - is there a link?

We had a question in our January Adoptee Support Group on whether the trauma of adoption could cause Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in adoptees. It's a really great question, but the answer is not straightforward.

ADHD is a developmental disorder that begins in early childhood. It affects our brain's higher-level thinking (or executive functioning), our ability to pay attention and self-regulate behaviour, thoughts and emotions.

The cause of ADHD is complex and, whilst there's been a lot of research into ADHD, the reason people develop it is not fully understood.

Research indicates that ADHD often runs in families, suggesting a significant genetic component. Additionally, it's thought that environmental factors may also influence development of ADHD. Prenatal influences, such as premature birth, low birth weight, and maternal stress during pregnancy, are thought to increase the risk of ADHD.

What this means for an adopted person is that both our genetics and environmental influences impact our likelihood of developing ADHD.

The symptoms of ADHD and trauma (which is often experienced by people impacted by adoption) can look similar. This is an important consideration when seeking support or diagnosis from medical and mental health practitioners.

You can find out more about ADHD, including symptoms, diagnosis and support at: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/attention-deficit-disorder-add-or-adhd>

Together, we are creating a culture where people impacted by adoption feel safe to speak, to be heard, and to heal. I couldn't be prouder of our peer support community and the legacy of connection and hope we are building.

Mothers Retreat - Bribie Island, August 2025



A Mothers' Retreat will be held at the beautiful Bribie Island Surf Club this August. This special weekend is designed to offer care, connection, and a supportive space for mothers who lost a child to adoption. View the flyer [here](#) for full details, and contact the passionate organisers to learn more or secure your place. This retreat is funded by the Australian Government's Forced Adoption Support Services Small Grants program.

'Thank you for facilitating this life changing reunion for me and my daughter.'

Mother, April 2025



Support Groups

Our peer support groups are a powerful way for people impacted by adoption to learn, grow and heal. Our experienced and compassionate facilitators have lived experience of adoption.

Below are our scheduled meeting dates for 2025. Participation at the groups is free.

Mothers' Morning Tea - For mothers who have experienced separation from their children by adoption. A regular morning tea from 10am to 12 noon - 16 July, 17 Sept & 19 Nov. Venue: ground floor meeting room at 505 Bowen Tce, New Farm.

Adoptee Support Group - For adopted people. (1.30pm - 3.30pm) 12 July, 13 Sept & 8 Nov. Venue: ground floor meeting room at 505 Bowen Tce, New Farm.

Mixed Group - For adopted people & their siblings & mothers and fathers separated from their children by adoption. Attendees are welcome to bring along a friend or family member for support. (1.30pm to 3.30pm) - 7 June, 2 Aug, 4 Oct & 6 Dec. NOTE: Mixed Group meetings are held at New Farm Library Meeting Room, 135 Sydney St, New Farm. Venue & facilities are wheelchair accessible. On-site parking is limited, so allow time to find a nearby street park.

Please arrive before the scheduled time, as doors are locked once the group begins to ensure the safety and privacy of participants.

To keep up with the latest information or changes, please keep an eye on our website and Facebook page.